DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 129 EA 022 856

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TITLE Using the Case Study Approach To Identify School Improvement Practices; Implications for Collaborative Partnerships.
PUB DATE Mar 91
NOTE 49p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (New Orleans, LA, March 1991). Some light print may not reproduce adequately in paper copy.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Case Studies; Educational Environment; *Educational Improvement; High Schools; Institutional Cooperation; Institutional Mission; *Leadership Styles; *Principals; *School Effectiveness; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Georgia

ABSTRACT

A collaborative effort between a high school principal and researcher to identify a successful principal's school improvement agenda and practices is described in this report of one of four case studies. Methodology involved indepth interviews with the principal and surveys of 10 teachers to compare their perceptions of teacher/principal relationship norms and their principal's school improvement agenda with the principal's expressed strategies. The principal's goals in this case study were to improve student discipline, communication, school-community relations, and school pride. Aspiring to become the district superintendent, he used an authoritarian administrative style to vigorously market his public high school to an upperclass, private school-oriented community. Findings indicate an overall agreement of teachers' perceptions of school norms and the principal's agenda with the principal's school improvement plan. Two tables and one figure are included. (33 references) (LMI)

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Using the Case Study Approach to Identify School Improvement Practices: Implications for Collaborative Partnerships

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Paper prepared for presentation at the annual convention of the American Association of School Administrators
New Orleans, Louisiana, March 2, 1991

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This paper represents a collaborative effort between a high school principal and a researcher to identify a successful principal's school improvement agenda and practices in an improving high school. The principal, Mr. Lee (a pseudonym for the co-presenter), was one of the four principals participating in this statewide project (in Georgia). Wells High School was a pseudonym for North Springs High School in Fulton County, Georgia.

This study consisted of four case studies of outstanding principals who, with the assistance of their staffs, substantially improved their schools. The study's methodology is discussed in the context of the four case studies. The research discussed in this paper represents one of the four case studies.

Introduction

The national concern for maintaining our global competitiveness has resulted in numerous studies of high schools (Boyer, 1983; Sizer, 1984; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). The commissioned writers of A Nation at Risk intended to discuss all schooling (K-12); most of the report, however, was used to make recommendations for improvement of high schools. Since principals are essential for school success (Cubberly, 1923; Goodlad, 1955; Edmonds, 1979; Greenfield, 1982), the high school principalship logically becomes a subject of inquiry.

Although courses in education administration have been taught at least since 1885 (Achilles, 1988), we know very little about successful practices related to daily and long term school improvement. The principalship has been characterized as hectic, sporadic and unpredictable (Peterson, 1977-78), and dictated by personal survival and crisis management (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Howell, 1981). Characterizing the principalship, however, is not synonymous with identifying practices of successful secondary principals. This lack of knowledge has made some observers question whether education administration is a profession, since we lack a codified body of knowledge (Guthrie & Clifford, 1989; Judge, 1982). Identifying what successful principals do must be synthesized with education administration theory and models. This product forms the "substantive data base" (Culbertson, 1988) and a "distinctive body of knowledge" (Bok, 1987) for principal training programs. Such inquiries can help make education administration a profession. The investigator made such an inquiry by identifying school improvement (SI) practices of successful high school principals and their related school improvement agendas (SIAs).

The Collaborative Nature of the Study

This research was "collaborative" for three reasons. Intensive interview was used to collect most of the data. Many of the data provided the context within which the agendas and practices were identified and defined. Mission and vision, for instance, were defined in the context of each principal's beliefs, experience, and biography. Meaning often was constructed as a product of cooperative interaction between the investigator and the interviewees. Interviewees functioned as conferees or corroborators as a method of "negotiating meanings in context" (Anderson, 1989).

Second, data sources were triangulated (compared) to establish plausibility for the school improvement practices. Lee's "inner-voice" school improvement strategies were compared with categorized perceptions of how a sample of ten teachers perceived he improved Wells High School. Social norms defining the principal-teacher relationship (identified through teacher interview) were used as the third source. All teachers then were asked on a norm checklist whether they perceived these norms as operating or not. Investigator, principal, and teachers were all mediators during the data collection process.

Third, the investigator used Patton's (1990) conversational interview technique. Research questions and terms often were defined through question-and-answer

interaction between investigator and interviewee. (For example, many of the interviewees were quick to mention that the teachers also played a major role in improving these four schools.) The need for cooperation was so pivotal to the data collection that the study approximated a collaborative venture.

Methodology: Design, Procedures, and Analysis

This study used two research questions:

1. What were these principals' school improvement agendas?
2. What practices did these principals use in improving their schools?

Research Design

The qualitative study had a mixed descriptive and interpretive case study design (Merriam, 1988). Question 1 was essentially descriptive: Interview data were used to describe the school improvement agenda. Question 2 was interpretive: Data from three sources were compared and contrasted for meaning and congruency.

Four interpretive case studies as field investigation (Erickson, 1986) were used. Individuals in this study were assumed to construct their own social reality, rather than having objective reality always determine the individual's

perceptions (Gage, 1989). Abstractions then were constructed (inductively) across cases (Merriam, 1988).

These case studies comprised an empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon in real-life context when boundaries between phenomenon and context were not clearly evident, and when multiple sources of evidence were used (Yin, 1984). No prior commitment was made to a theoretical model, although constructs were used as school improvement theory -- against which case study interpretations were compared (Yin, 1984). This design included an ethnographic element: In using interactionism from the field of sociology, this study investigated norms relating to social interaction as a method of "negotiating meanings in context" (Anderson, 1989).

Based on the literature on the principalship and school improvement, the researcher assumed that the interview (Spradley, 1979) and "thick description" (Fetterman, 1982) could be used to identify school improvement agendas, strategies, and school-based norms in successful high schools. As naturalistic inquiry, this study proposed to establish plausibility (that principals in successful high schools make major contributions to their schools' success) without establishing causality (Campbell, 1978).

Internal validity in empirical case studies is closely associated with reliability (Yin, 1984). Reliability means congruency among data sources. This congruency can be used

to posit a form of internal validity -- not in causal terms (a term germane to objective quantitative research) -- but in "truth value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity relates to this study's "transferability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): Engaging in comparative understanding beyond the immediate circumstances of a local setting (Erickson, 1986).

Procedure for Identifying Successful High Schools

1. A pool of successful principals was identified through the nomination technique. The researcher called Regional Educational Service Agencies directors, superintendents, professors of educational leadership, and other officials. The two criteria for the nomination process were that these principals had gained a reputation for "turning a school around" during their tenures; and that following this tenure phase, student outcomes improved significantly.

2. Final selection of the four principals included these variables:

a. long term (at least three years) increase in student achievement as measured by standardized tests;

b. selection as a member of the National Schools of Excellence (U.S. Department of Education) or a member of the Georgia Schools of Excellence;

c. decrease in high school dropout rate;

d. decrease in suspension and/or expulsion rate;

e. decrease in student retention rates;

f. increase in rate of students accepted to post-secondary education;

g. increase in employment rates of graduates;

h. the current principal has been there at least three years;

3. The table for Wells High School containing the student improvement data is available for interested readers.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection occurred for three days at each site. Procedures for each research question follow.

Research Question #1

Each principal was interviewed three times (on the mornings of Days 1 and 2 and on the afternoon of Day 2). The three interview topics, respectively, were: principal's mission; school context; and principal's vision.

Research Question #2

Three data sets comprised this question: the principals' emerging strategies, teacher perceptions of their principals' school improvement contributions, and social norms claimed by interviewees to define principal-teacher relationships.

Principals' Strategies. Each principal was asked the open-ended question: " What strategies did you use to

improve your school?" The interviewer and principal discussed the most appropriate framework within which to relate these strategies. (All four principal interviewees chose the chronological framework.) The interviewer recorded these strategies with two interviews (the afternoon of Day 2, and the morning of Day 3).

Teacher Perceptions of Their Principals' SI Contributions. The teacher perception data were collected using the following method and questions.

a. Ten teachers were interviewed. The interviewer first explained the study's parameters: Using this construct (Principals tend to affect teachers who affect students [Clark, Lotto, & McCarthy, 1979]), this research was concerned only with the relationships between principals and teachers. Then the following open-ended questions (Patton, 1990) were used:

b. "How has this school improved?"

c. "How was your principal involved in this improvement?"

d. "Can you describe a specific example of how s/he went about contributing to the implementation of this improvement?"

e. For this protocol, steps (a) through (d) were repeated until the interviewee could no longer specify school improvement efforts contributed by the principal.

Construction of the Norm Checklist. The norm checklist was constructed in the following way:

a. A list of tentative norms was drawn up and critiqued by each principal and several of the interviewed teachers for the norms' validity: Did these norms reflect the school improvement expectations between each principal and teachers? This ad hoc committee also culled any phrases potentially distracting to teacher respondents from this list.

b. These norms were compiled on a norm checklist, and returned to each principal. All teachers were asked to complete these checklists. Teachers were asked to mark "yes" if they perceived that a norm was operating, regardless of whether they agreed (philosophically) with that norm. They were instructed to leave norms blank only if they had a particular circumstance, such as being a new teacher to the school, or physical isolation from the main school building. (A few teachers were located in separate buildings and occasionally lacked a vantage point to make judgments). Checklist return rates, respectively, for the four schools were: 91%, 58%, 70%, and 73%, for an average of 73%.

Study Analysis

Erickson's "triangulation of the data" (1986) was used in comparing and contrasting the several data sources (See

Figure 1 for the research paradigm). Interview data were tape-recorded, transcribed into the word processor, and analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted to find "linkages" and "generalizations of patterns" among the data sources (Erickson, pp. 150-151).

Research Question #1

Data defining the three topics of school context, principal's mission, and principal's vision were analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted into the SIA. Were data from the three sets consistent? How did each principal's mission affect his/her vision? How was the vision affected by school context?

Research Question #2

SI practices were based on the preponderance of the evidence among the three data sources: the principals' narrative of SI strategies, SI contributions identified by teachers, and agreed-on norms. The principals' narrative accounts of SI strategies were analyzed for emerging themes. How did each principal implement the SIA into strategies for school improvement?

The emerging strategic themes were compared and contrasted with the perceptions of SI improvements by teachers with whom they worked to improve their schools. (Hence on the research paradigm, Figure 1, these two data sources were placed on corners of an inverted triangle.) The teacher perceptions on their principals' SIs were

categorized by common characteristics (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1990) and by content analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Holsti, 1969). A panel of experts (four professors in education administration) was used to generate inter-rater reliability estimates for the four sets of categories, representing the four principals: How accurately did they replicate the categorization of SI practices into the categories induced by the researcher? These inter-reliability estimates for the four schools, respectfully, were: 81%, 90%, 81% and 70%.

The prevalent categories (those having both the greater number of the ten interviewed teachers and the greatest total number of items) were compared with themes of the principals' strategies. Was there a logical congruency between these two data sets? Interpretations and speculations about cohesion, or the lack thereof, were made.

Norms perceived as occurring by more than 70% of the teachers (Foskett, 1967; Keedy, 1982; Newcomb, 1950) were interpreted as existing in that school. Each checklist was analyzed for reliability, or the extent to which responses may be influenced by extraneous factors (e.g., the time of day respondents filled out checklists). Reliability coefficient alphas, respectively, for the four schools were: .81, .92, .84, and .76. Norms were compared to the established congruency between the principals' strategies and the prevalent categories of SI improvements. In

defining SI practices, these three data sets were "interactional" (Erickson, 1986). Since norms define both roles (Jackson, 1966) and behavioral expectations (Homans, 1958), agreed-on norms were expected to confirm both the principals' SI strategies and SI improvements. (Hence school norms represent the "bottom" of the triangle on Figure 1.) Collected through teacher interviews, norms exceeding a cutoff score of 70% (Foskett, 1967; Keedy, 1982) were analyzed as operating in that particular school. The methodology has been explained in the context of the entire study: four case studies of four principals. The SIA and school improvement practices of Principal Lee and Wells High School follow.

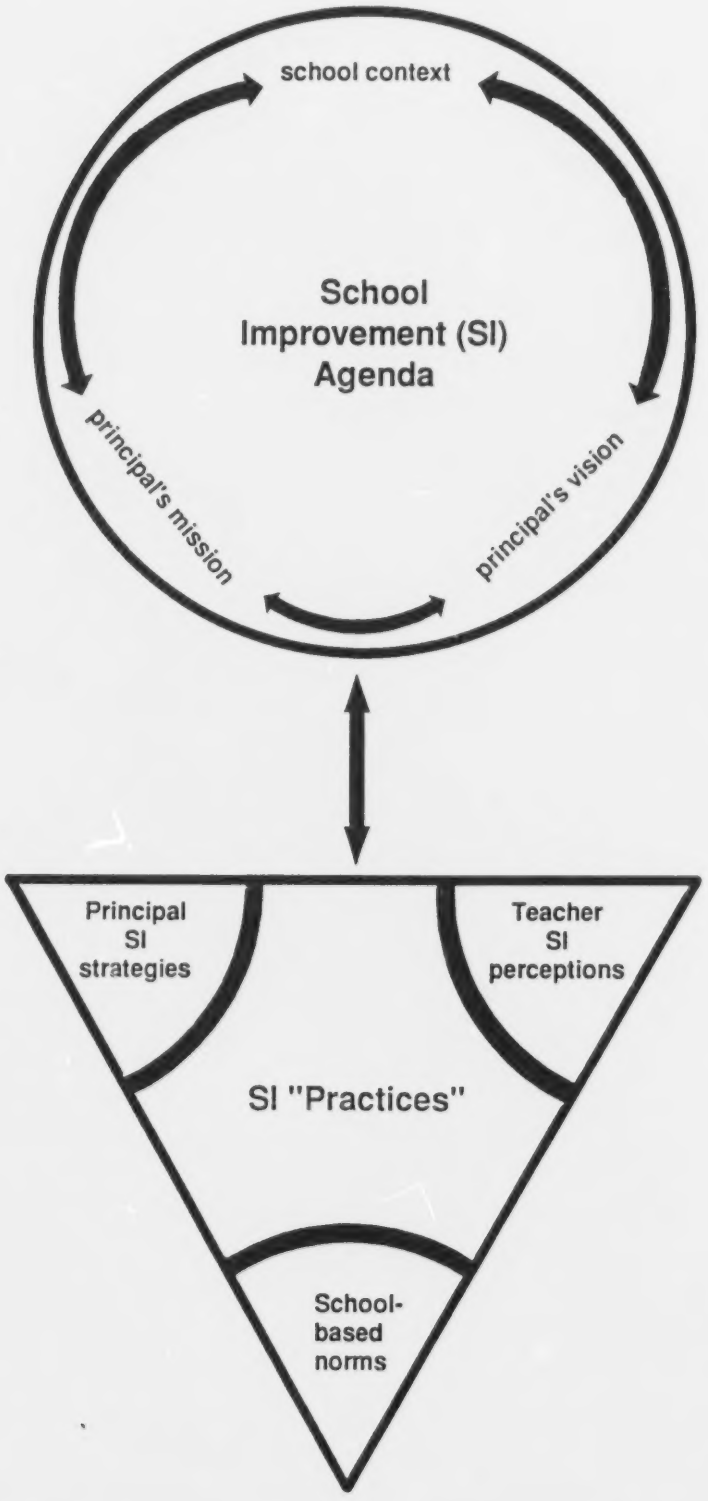
What was Lee's School Improvement Agenda?

For brevity, School Context, Mission and Vision have been synthesized into an executive summary. Only part of the School Context is included in this paper. Complete sections are available in the comprehensive study report from the investigator.

School Context

This school was located in the suburbs north of a large, southeastern city. There had been four principals. The first principal had a 17 year tenure, the second a two-year tenure, and the third a four-year tenure. Principal Lee was now in his third year. Principal Lee's

Figure 1. Research Paradigm



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predecessor was promoted to a directorship position. Principal Lee was viewed by his boss as the first effective principal this school had seen.

Demographics

In 1964 this was an affluent school community with a middle to upper class economic setting. There were no apartment dwellings. When Principal Lee arrived in 1987, the school continued to be skewed toward the affluent (i.e., children of executives, business owners, other professionals). In 1988 the school attendance area expanded, however, and the student population changed. Majority-to-minority (M-to-M) busing allowed blacks to attend a different school with their transportation paid for by the board of education. At the time of the study, approximately 60 blacks attended WHS. The expanded attendance area also brought an increase of single parent families from 21% to 28%. Many of these single parents were employed in the service sector (i.e., secretaries, teachers, retail clerks, IBM technicians). The percent of free/reduced lunch increased from 5% to 15%. There was now an English as a second language (ESL site) with approximately 40 students. There were now apartment complexes in the school area with an average rent between $650 and $700 per month. Between 92% and 96% of the students went on to some type of higher education, but Principal Lee expected this percent to drop as the 1988

service-sector students and subsequent classes graduated from WHS.

Conditions Prior to Lee's Tenure.

Prior to Principal Lee's arrival in 1987, the school suffered from a lack of discipline. There was a communication gap between the school and the community. The school was inefficiently run by the administration. Specifically, departments lacked coordination between each other and with the administration. Each was, in fact, its own island. There were no faculty meetings. The school was not maintained as a physical plant. Lastly, student achievement when compared to the early 1980s was low.

Executive Summary of SIA

Principal Lee's personal mission was to become a superintendent. Prior to his current position, he assumed two high school administrative jobs to get the experience required for a challenging, high quality principalship. He had learned from these two positions to be decisive in what he did. He also developed a tight management philosophy in which everything fit into five slots: strong leadership, constant evaluation and revamping, high expectations for students and staff, pleasant but orderly environment, and heavy emphasis on English and math skills. As indicated below, he used this management philosophy in integrating his four goals related to improving WHS. (These goals will be explained in the Strategies section.)

Principal Lee perceived that the affluent middle class, which dominated the Wells High School (WHS) community, wanted its school improved, so that it could offer far more to its students. This community expectation fit Principal Lee's professional mission: He had always wanted every school to be the best in every area, and, within that philosophy, he wanted to take every student as far as possible. Principal Lee had always believed: "Affluent people want more than everyone else. That is why they bothered to become affluent to begin with. I gave them what they wanted and improved the school to meet their needs."

Given this school's history, the ingredients were there for immediate school improvement. The community expected a private school atmosphere within a public school. Some parents had sent their children to WHS when it had been considered a school of academic excellence in the early 1980s. Many parents wanted to once again send their children to WHS, but the school's reputation had declined. His vision was essentially a market goal: Principal Lee had to convince parents that WHS could once again be a school of academic excellence and a school capable of competing with the nearby parochial and independent schools.

Lee set four school improvement goals. Two goals were generating a high marketability for WHS to an upper-middle class <u>school community</u> and creating a sense of <u>school pride</u> for the students and teachers. He had to improve the

student discipline (to counteract the community perception that WHS was a drug haven for unruly, obnoxious and spoiled kids). Communication among administration, teachers, and students had to be improved to both instill school pride and improve test scores so that WHS would become a marketable alternative to independent and parochial schools.

Because of WHS's previous ineffective administrative leadership, Principal Lee knew that his immediate gameplan had two phases. The strategies section below demonstrates how Principal Lee used the management philosophy he had learned from his two previous positions to weave together the four inter-related goals above.

School Improvement (SI) Practices

The first section consists of Principal Lee's "inner voice" as he chronicled his SI strategies used to improve WHS. This chronology is then analyzed for strategic themes.

A Chronological Description of Principal Lee's SI Strategies

General Gameplans

"When I first arrived I wanted to assess the situation to make sure that the perceptions I had from the interviewing process were accurate. So I confirmed my own perceptions with those of the central office staff, administrative team in my own building, students, parents, and the local advisory team required by the county [which

consisted of community people, parents, students, and teachers]. I also collected data on test scores for standardized achievement tests [Basic Skills Test, Test of Achievement Proficiency, and Advanced Placement], student referrals, teacher questionnaires passed out each year, the NASSP climate questionnaire, and student attendance."

"Next, I identified those competent people among central office, the teachers, the administrative team, and parents with both a sense of assessment and a vision for improving the school. I had two general strategies. One, the principal should never ask teachers to do what the principal does not do. The first year I made sure I was number one in student referrals since student discipline had been a problem. Second, I wanted to make an impact on the teachers from the opening day that things were going to be different at WHS."

Student Discipline

When first offered the job in the summer of 1987, it was too late to rewrite the entire student handbook, but Lee had his assistant principal add rules for student discipline just before it was printed. These rules were very consistent with specific procedures and consequences. During that first year (1987-88), he made the following additions to the student handbook. The dress code was stricter. The school grounds would not be trashed; no food could leave the lunch room. Students could not wander

around outside the school. Certain places were off limits, like the cars in the parking lot, since one student previous to Lee's arrival had been caught with a gun in the parking lot. Consequences were defined for tardiness: a student late three times for a particular teacher's class was referred to the office.

Principal Lee made sure that all three administrators attended every football game and one administrator every home basketball game. (Previously, administrators had not attended the games and only police were there.) In the corridors, Principal Lee made sure he had high visibility and enforcement. He did not walk by kids doing something wrong and ignore them. Whenever an infraction occurred, he made the infraction clear to the students and metered out punishments consistently and fairly. "This hurt me with the students, especially the seniors, but it had to be done." He also announced to the faculty, "We need 63 pairs of eyes. We [the administrators] will take care of the heat for the discipline, but you have to refer the students." Lee also made sure rules were kept consistent and did not change during the year. "Previously, the word was 'just wait and the rule would change'." For example, for one month previous to Principal Lee's arrival, students could not take trays outside the lunch room, and then that rule changed.

Tightening Up Communication with the Assistant Principal

The assistant principal (AP) was extremely competent, but needed to know exactly what to do and have specific expectations explained. One expectation was that the AP was not to stay in the office, but be out in the corridors anticipating problems before they happened, as opposed to dealing with problems after they occurred.

School Community Relations

Principal Lee knew as soon as he arrived that he had a secretary who would hurt him with the school community. For instance, she would often put the answering machine on to free her up to type letters. Principal Lee moved her to the attendance room where there would be far more people working around her than she preferred, and "she quit in five seconds." Before he did this, he made sure that there were parents in the community who would be willing to help him fill in until he hired another secretary.

He made sure all public performances were done "first class". For graduation and honors assemblies, he provided tablecloths, potted plants and steps to allow the students to come up to the stage to get their diplomas and awards, instead of handing them out to students while seated in the audience. During graduation he made sure that the "screw-offs" did not attend so that the ceremony was done well and was not farcical. He attended, or had another administrator attend, all sports and activities, like baseball, band and orchestra. (A major community complaint

had been that on several occasions administrators had not supervised Friday night football games.) He obtained a public address system for basketball games. He also solved vandalism problems by having all results of vandalism removed immediately. He offered a reward, caught and expelled those responsible. Since his first year, there had been only one case of vandalism.

Principal Lee promoted student achievement in the community. Students wrote newspaper articles about their achievements. He called students into his office to congratulate them for higher grades, etc. The quality of Honors Night was improved with awards on higher quality paper, nicer looking plaques and honor roll letters. He obtained bumper stickers and "We're Number One!" pins. He stressed this important issue to the community: "This is the best school in the state."

Finally, he promoted a positive attitude from teachers by congratulating them at faculty meetings, sending birthday cards to faculty members, and writing occasional notes to individual teachers. He instituted a Teacher of the Month Award. A committee of parents and one AP made these selections. One of these teachers last year received the Teacher of the Year award which included $500 from a large corporation which had a school/business partnership with WHS.

Generally, Principal Lee tried everything that could help the school's image.

Improved Communication

During the first year, Lee concentrated on setting up parents/principal discussion meetings. Eighty parents attended the first meeting. They wanted to size up the new principal's views on issues like the student dress codes. Over time, the numbers of parents attending dropped to four or five, and at the last meeting no parents attended.

He also established student/principal discussions during his first year. Students could sign up on a list to come in and speak with the principal where they were free to "get a Coke and complain." Most of students' complaints were not about improving the school, but about personal issues, like eating outside and parking stickers. Principal Lee implemented one positive suggestion the first year -- a salad bar. This strategy worked well because the students perceived that Lee was responsive to student requests.

In 1989-90 Lee established several forums for better communications with and among faculty and staff. He set up a faculty liaison committee which consisted of one representative from each department and operated as a complaint session. Teachers anonymously could complain to their department representatives. The purpose was to identify problems and solutions, and to improve communication. Even if the principal denied the request, he

gave his reasons for doing so. Through the faculty liaison committee, Principal Lee became convinced that there was a principal/teacher morale problem. He wanted to work on this, yet he would not compromise on certain things regarding teachers being to work on time, being appropriately dressed (i.e., no jeans or sneakers except for athletic coaches), and teaching the full class period. Other structures set in place to improve communications included the administrative team, which consisted of the two assistant principals and the counselors, that met weekly . He set up monthly department chair and faculty meetings. To facilitate communication with parents, he held annual PTA meetings by grade level. Finally, he had a new student orientation for parents: a "show off" session where the cheerleaders, the band, and an excerpt from a school play got the parents and students ready for the next year. This way a positive tone was set for new students before they even attended WHS.

One of the main problems with school pride was that the school was not well kept and people did not take pride in working there. Part of Lee's solution for these problems was setting high standards for custodians. Of the original ten custodians, only two were left. He insisted, through the central office, that improvements, such as painting the building interior and picking up trash, be made. He also established certain rules for student conduct which helped

the custodians. With rules like, "You cannot eat outside," custodians could keep the buildings clean instead of going out and spending an hour or more picking up trays that had been taken outside during warm weather. He brought certain physical improvements to the school, such as an excellent copy machine and new curtains.

Lee imporved the student image by promoting achievement and changing the dress code. He promoted achievement by making comparisons with Test of Achievement Proficiency (TAP). WHS had the highest TAP in the county in 1989. He instituted a dress code through the student handbook. The general rule of thumb was that students should not dress in ways that could affect their behavior, such as being dressed as if they were going to the beach. Tank tops, sunglasses and shorts were disallowed. As a result of the dress code, community people began to perceive that students represented WHS well in the community.

Year Two.

Lee kept working on the goals identified during the first year. He believed he achieved these goals approximately half way through the second year. He continued to work at them; however, because by their nature, these goals were ongoing. One additional goal he set for year two was improving instruction.

Lee set standards for acceptable classroom instruction, and he enforced these standards. In the first year, one

teacher was recommended for termination. Due to some confusion in the district office over this teacher's contract, however, this teacher returned for the 1988-89 year, but at a different school.

In the second year (1988-89), Principal Lee used state-mandated Georgia Teacher Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDRI) and got rid of two more ineffective tenured teachers. These teachers were teaching the subject matter, and not the students; Lee had observed that there was little interchange between each of these two teachers and the students. One teacher took early retirement; she knew that she would have to work harder. He also wrote a professional development plan for one of these teachers, who at this point, was still at WHS. Lee then began to study and inform teachers of failure rates as an indication that they were not effective.

Principal Lee, during the second year, also took an aggressive approach to school recognition. He had a much catchier school brochure printed on nice, glossy paper. He assembled school packets and distributed them to realtors who then gave packets to parents of eighth graders who were looking to settle in the attendance zone. Lee wanted to convince these parents and students to attend WHS and not go to an independent or a parochial school.

Year Three

Lee began some advanced planning for both the district-wide Magnet School for Math and Science, which will open in 1990-91, and set a goal to achieve State School of Excellence. Lee rewrote the School of Excellence application that WHS had submitted for the previous year over the summer of 1990. During 1989-90, he divided it up into portions and gave those portions to department chairs and other teachers for their input. (WHS did receive the School of Excellence award in 1990.)

Emerging Themes In Principal Lee's Strategies During the SI Process

What was immediately clear to Lee was that he first had to get WHS under control. He accomplished this with aggressive, unilateral, and consistent management. During this process he consistently did two things. He never asked anyone to do anything he was unwilling to do. Second, he made an immediate impact on teachers on the first day that things were going to be different at WHS. During the first one and a half years at WHS, Lee concentrated on surviving and getting the school under control. Principal Lee reflected: "I put things in place in an authoritative way to stop the downward spiral." The theme was "coming together."

During the second year he concentrated on improving instruction and student achievement. The theme then was

"moving forward." He monitored teacher performance and ensured that three teachers whose performance did not meet his standards did not return to WHS. In the third year, he reevaluated what he and the staff were doing for the new less-than-able service-sector students attending WHS. He began emphasizing basic skills through his evaluation of student failure rates.

Lee had assessed the situation at WHS and developed a tight, time-efficient management framework. Everything he did fit into four, inter-related goals: student discipline, community relations, communication, and school pride. His high expectations for faculty and students were expressed in his recognition of high quality teaching and student achievement. An astute observer, Lee determined his priorities and made deft, well planned moves. He knew he was fine-tuning a potentially excellent, highly academic public school. In this fine-tuning process he first concentrated on school-wide control, then shifted to classroom instruction, and finally focused on the less-academically advantaged students.

Congruency between Lee's SI Strategies and Teacher Perceptions

Table 1 indicates the categorization of teacher perceptions describing how Lee improved WHS. These

-Table 1

Wells High School: Teacher Perceptions of Principal School Improvements

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Code	Category Descriptions and Examples	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	T*
SD	Principal Lee improved **student discipline**: clear, concise expectations for student conduct in **Handbook**; student attendance policies were implemented; teachers knew they were backed by administrators	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x x	10 11
SCR	Principal Lee improved **school community relations**: Parent organizations were enlarged; increased school recognition (e.g., test scores, Georgia School of Excellence); produced new brochure; met with real estate agents to "talk up" the school; school activities, (e.g., graduation) reflected well on school					x		x		x		3 3
CASF	Principal Lee improved the within-school **communication** with **assistant principals**, **students** and **faculty**: faculty and student handbooks; well-run faculty meetings; faculty liason meetings; more receptive to reasoning from teachers (e.g., through Morale Committee)	x	x x	x x	x	x		x	x		x	8 10
SP	Principal Lee improved **school pride** for students and faculty: School was clean; students recognized within school for achievement in all areas; a student dress code was implemented; faculty were recognized for outstanding contributions; school rallies for WHS achievement		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x x		6 9
II	Principal Lee **improved instruction**: by setting at least minimal standards for teacher performance through GTEP documentation (e.g., teach full 55 minutes); discussing failure rates with teachers; a few teachers left voluntarily; unannounced observations the first three weeks of school			x	x			x x	x	x	x x	6 8
PC	Principal Lee established a more **professional climate**: Administration, not parents now ran the school; teachers were expected to be on time and fulfill responsibilities. Sports less emphasized; teacher workroom equipment improved; he knew teacher classroom needs and got necessary materials; opporunities for teachers to attend conferences (PC)			x	x	x x		x	x x	x	x	7 9
Abc												
Abc	*T = totals # of respondents (10) / total responses											

categories are first analyzed and then compared with the above themes of Lee's SI strategies for their congruency.

Teacher perceptions reflected a broad agreement with the four school improvement goals articulated by Principal Lee in both getting WHS under control and implementing his vision. The category Improved Instruction corroborates Lee's classroom monitoring. The category Professional Climate can be used to illuminate Lee's relationship with his teachers as he proceeded to improve WHS. Teachers -- in addition to students -- had to recognize the importance of professional standards. Lee appeared more than willing to reciprocate for this compliance by helping teachers do a better job in the classroom.

All teachers included improvement of Student Discipline. Clearly, discipline was loose, at best, before Principal Lee's arrival. Some teachers perceived that the administration now backed teachers against parents and that this had not always been the perception before Principal Lee's tenure.

Eight of the teachers, with two teachers each including two items, included items relating to Improved Communication with assistant principals, faculty, and students. Prior to Lee's tenure, departments were islands unto themselves and rules varied according to whom one talked with and from month to month. Now, the material included in faculty/student handbooks was concise, clear and

followed. There were agendas set up for faculty meetings and the directives were clear.

There also was a teacher consensus on the Improved School Pride. Seven teachers contributed to this category (with one teacher giving two items and one teacher three items). Lee had seen the connection between the dilapidated and dirty appearance of the building, on the one hand, and low self-pride among students and teachers. Lee worked hard to improve the physical plant by keeping it clean, to institute a dress code, and to recognize faculty.

School Community Relations had little teacher consensus. Only three of the teachers included items meeting the category of community relations. This perception may reflect teacher perceptions of the new relationships Lee developed with parents as supplanting the relationships teachers had previously developed with other parents. Lee knew when he came that he had to establish relationships with the parents wanting Wells improved by applying consistent rules both for students and teachers. Another explanation may be that secondary school teachers, especially, tend to see things in context of their own classrooms and/or of their departments. This perspective is different from the big picture that principals see in terms of how the entire school relates to their communities.

Teacher consensus (six teachers) on Improved Instruction needs clarification. Historically, good

teachers had been attracted to WHS because of its high academic reputation. However, in years prior to Principal Lee's tenure, standards had dropped. When Lee came, he set very clear, minimal standards for teacher performance. The accepted norm that teachers teach for the entire class and teach to the appropriate level of their students related more to instructional monitoring than direct assistance for instructional improvement. Instructional monitoring (at least four teachers left involuntarily) was all that was necessary. WHS had good teachers, who had been there since WHS had been an academically elite school in the 1970s.

Professional Climate may be considered the over-riding framework of Lee's strategies which embraced Lee's three-year tenure. Teachers now were expected to be on time for school and not to leave early. They also were expected to fulfill responsibilities. The items within this category appeared to be in response again to the recent history of the school before Principal Lee's tenure, when there was a perception that things were rather lax and some teachers could do what they wanted. This category was epitomized by the administrators, not parents, running the school. Before Lee's tenure, parents wanting to make a fuss were perceived as always getting their way (often at the teachers' expense). Also, by meeting teacher professional needs (e.g., workroom, materials, professional conferences), Lee was able to transcend his survival stage. He now was viewed

by several teachers as looking out for their interests, and not just that of WHS. According to these teachers, Lee had contributed to instilling a genuine climate in which teachers could improve their teaching.

Only one teacher included the last category, School Demographic Transitions. Many teachers may not have been aware of this goal, since this was a goal that Lee was working on for the year, 1990-91 In fact, the first committee did not meet until the third day of the researcher's data collection, February, 1990.

Analysis and Interpretation of Norm Checklist

Norms identified during teacher interviews were compared with the principal's strategies and the teachers' SI perceptions. The agreement among these three data sources comprise SI practices. Table 2 contains these norms.

Table 2

Norm Checklist for North Springs High School

n	Y	%	N	
29	21	72	08	1. Unlike pre-1987 it is now possible to teach the full 55 minutes without student interruptions in the hallways.

30	29	97	01	2. Unlike pre-1987 this high school is now an efficient, smoothly-running organization (discipline is tight, we now have set agendas for faculty meetings, meetings are scheduled in advance).
29	26	90	03	3. It is now easier (than pre-1987) to discipline students (e.g., kissing in the halls) because we know we are backed by the front office.
31	21	68	10	4. There is now efficient, effective communication among members of each department and between departments and the administration. (Each department is now not an island unto itself).
31	31	100	00	5. Teachers are aware that the principal suddenly might walk in unannounced. Teachers have gotten into the routine of starting their classes on time and not wasting time at the end (i.e., just using "filler" activities.)
32	30	94	02	6. We may teach how we'd like -- provided we do a good job in the classroom (e.g., have clear objectives, relate to students, and teach students, not the subject).
31	25	81	06	7. To the extent that Principal Lee (a pseudonym) believes that you do a good job in the classroom, there is that possibility of his being more open to negotiating with some of your own issues and concerns.
31	29	94	02	8. Teachers are responsible for enforcing the school rules (such as student discipline). If you don't enforce the rules Principal Lee wants to know why. Because he is very visible and spends time out in the school, he often is in the position to know whether rules are being enforced by the teachers or not.

32 31 97 01 9. Academics have always been important here at this school, but over the last three years you are expected to teach a full 55 minutes; otherwise, 5 minutes off here and there can become 10 minutes and then the instructional time is gone.

29 29 100 00 10. During the first two or three weeks of school our principal comes in and observes every teacher in the school informally (apart from the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument).

29 26 90 03 11. Over the past three years the school climate has changed. Instead of getting different answers from different people there are now specific, consistent rules that we follow (such as student discipline).

25 19 76 06 12. Some of the teachers here have never taught anywhere else than at this school. In the recent past consistent rules have not existed and some people could do what they wanted to do. Consequently, when rules (i.e., being to work on time) are consistently enforced some teachers will never want to be told what to do. An advantage to consistent enforcement of rules and to a principal who does not play favorites amongst different teachers, however, is that there are very few power cliques among teachers. This makes it easier to relate with colleagues, and not have to worry who is "over" whom.

31 30 97 01 13. Student and faculty handbooks are not elaborate or detailed, but what is in there is expected to be enforced.

25 23 92 02

14. Our school has always had the three ingredients to be an academically excellent school: bright, well-informed teachers who knew their content areas; generally affluent parents who wanted academic excellence for their children and who would back teachers and administrators; and students who came in, for the most part, ready and able to learn. Now we have a principal with the organizational skills to make the community aware of some of the great things we already had. As a result academic reputation has improved over the last three years and more students want to attend school here, as opposed to attending independent or parochial schools.

28 22 79 06

15. There are two terms that can describe the relationship between a principal and teachers: consistency and fairness, and these two terms are not always synonymous. Consistency relates to consistent enforcement of the rules and with Principal Lee this always occurs: If a teacher is late for work three or four times a note will be put into his or her mailbox, and possibly in one's personnel file, regardless of who the teacher is. Fairness relates to teachers possibly being treated differently. Teachers doing an excellent job in the classroom and willing to accept the principal's firm ideas about certain things often can negotiate (i.e., participate in a give-and take) their issues and concerns with Principal Lee.

31 29 94 02

16. The responsibilities of the two assistant principals are clearly defined and teachers with various issues and concerns know whom to see.

30 28 93 02

17. When there is a disagreement between the principal and the teacher, chances are very likely that the principal will come out ahead.

27 26 96 01 18. Before Principal Lee's arrival we had been somewhat lax about certain things. Principal Lee had to get control of the situation as best he could, even though some might disagree with how he got control. Now he has specified duties and responsibilities and we have to carry them out (such as hall and parking lot duties).

27 24 89 03 19. In a way Principal Lee has made my job easier: There are no exceptions to the rules teachers are expected to follow so it does not pay to second guess him. I do not get caught in the middle between department members and the administration.

29 26 90 03 20. This principal will always meet with groups concerned about the quality of the schooling. He has started several groups, such as the Parents-Principal Discussion Group and the Student-Principal Discussion Group, and he encourages openness and frankness amongst members of these groups and himself.

23 11 48 12 21. The number of student failures is very important. If it is the nature of the student population, (e.g., slow or remedial) then the teacher does not know the students well enough and is not teaching to their level. The students are not getting a chance to succeed.

31 22 71 09 22. Student discipline has gone beyond being on time and eating in the corridors. It also includes students having a pencil, and coming into class prepared to work.

27 25 93 02 23. Regarding extra materials and attending seminars, teachers can get what they want if Principal Lee is convinced that it will improve their teaching and if it is within his resource capability. He is consistent in helping you in this regard, and he does not play favorites even if you are not loyal to the administration.

27 27 100 00 24. Providing we are aware of and follow the procedure, teachers are backed with their disciplined students. Before this principal's tenure parental influence and pressure often could get exceptions for the student discipline policies.

28 26 93 02 25. Through Principal Lee's influence in school improvements this is a better place to teach, partly because he has higher expectations for teachers. If you are doing a good job as a teacher you have his support, but if you are weak you should be concerned.

28 25 89 03 26. Teachers are encouraged to always have a possible solution when they approach the principal with a problem. This helps the process of solving the problem, and also makes the teachers aware that problems do need solutions that often can be worked out cooperatively.

Norms were identified through teacher interviews and analysis that related to school improvement categories: Student Discipline, Communication, Instructional Improvement, Professional Climate, and School-Community Relations. Norms were not identified relating to School Pride (which may be a rather illusive category), and School Demographic Transition. As speculated above, School-Community Relations did not involve teachers who were most concerned with conditions affecting classrooms, but related more to community leaders, parents, and potential parents of WHS students. School demographic transition as a school goal had just been set during 1989-90 academic year and the committee was just being formed.

Student Discipline

Norms 3, 8, and 13 showed strong agreement. Teacher agreement on norms 1 and 22, which had to do with hallway behaviors, had approximately 70% agreement. It may be that student discipline and the rules of the game between Principal Lee and the teachers were well delineated, but that teachers still had some reservations about discipline in the corridors.

Communications

Teachers perceived that communication was fairly well instituted. Teachers, according to these norms, know what to expect when working with assistant principals and the

principal. Norm 4, however, did not indicate significant agreement (68%). This might have been due to the construction of the norm since it asked about two areas: communication among members of departments and between departments and administration. Other explanations may simply be that in secondary education, communication, as it relates to departments and administration, is always problematic or that there are one or two departments in which communication is not as clear as it should be.

Instructional Improvement

According to norms 5, 6, 9, 10, and 25, Principal Lee clearly not only has high expectations for teachers, but communicated those expectations through his observation in classrooms. Norm 21 received only 47% teacher agreement. This low agreement may be partially explained by teacher's tendencies to not be willing to take full responsibility for student achievement regardless of student background. The reader might remember that in the last two years WHS has had considerable influx of less-than-able students.

Professional Climate

Norms 17, 18, and 23 indicate that Principal Lee has been a climate setter regarding professional expectations as defined by this category. The teachers were able to get appropriate materials to improve their teaching. Norm 7, 12, and 15 had relatively moderate agreement (81%, 76%, and 79% respectively). These three norms relate not to the

issue of consistency, but fairness. That is, teachers who are doing the extra-special job in the classroom could conceivably be treated differently than other teachers. Although this norm was expressed by the principal and, indirectly, by some teachers, the idea of teachers being treated differently is not popular among teachers.

School-Community Relations

Norm 14 was the only norm in this category. The possible reason for the paucity of norms in this category has been stated above. This norm received 92% agreement and describes the essential dynamic that defines the relationship between the school and the school community. Parents, logically, prefer to save money and not send their children to an independent or parochial school. But often, it is up to the principal to do certain things (described in the Principal Strategies section on school and community relations) that can make the school a desirable and acceptable place according to the perceptions of the community. As already discussed, before Principal Lee's tenure, there had been a community perception that WHS was frequented by rowdy, obnoxious teenagers uninterested in education. This was only partly true, but apparently, Principal Lee was able to do what was necessary within the school and package the school for the community to change this perception.

Case Study Summary: Knowing What He Had

and Where He Wanted to Go

Principal Lee epitomized the phenomenon of "job fit". Lee was a strong-willed administrator who was not afraid of being unpopular and making the hard decisions needed to gain control of the school even at the expense of some teacher animosity. Lee's mission was both to become a superintendent and at WHS "to take every kid as far I can." This ambitious agenda meshed with WHS's School Context. This community was potentially a private school community within a public school district. WHS had always had the ingredients for a good school: a hard working and well trained faculty with a good grasp of the content areas; professionally successful parents with high expectations for schooling and for their children to succeed; and, students ready to learn, with many of them ambitious for attending our nation's better schools.

Principal Lee had to market WHS to an upper-middle class community that had been sending their children to independent and parochial schools, because they had become disenchanted with the school and viewed the school as chaotic with little teacher control and as a drug haven. Lee knew that accomplishing four goals (improving student discipline, communication, school-community relations, and school pride) could market his school to a constituency that logically preferred to save private school tuition expenses

(his vision). Lee could once again gain community acceptance by marketing WHS as a viable alternative to independent and parochial schools.

Tactically, Lee spent much of his time countering past negative perceptions of WHS (hence his two themes: "coming together"; "moving forward"). Because he had excellent teachers, who had been attracted to WHS when it had enjoyed a reputation of academic excellence in the late 1970s, his instructional role was that of monitoring by establishing and enforcing specific classroom minimum instructional standards. Principal Lee perceived that little change facilitation or teacher involvement in decision-making was needed because of the academic potential of WHS to once again become a top-flight public high school. Lee played the instructional monitoring role because only this role was necessary.

Teachers had to follow strict rules consistently, since students also were expected to follow specifically defined rules. Lee used his considerable organizational and public relations skills to make others aware that WHS once again had become a top-flight preparatory school. In his task orientation and consistency for rules, Principal Lee was similar to a corporate executive. His practices emphasized a concerted drive for school excellence to provide a well-run school in which its students could excel.

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